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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 7927

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 015778

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2018

TAGS: [OSCE](#) [PHUM](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: DEMARCHE ON INCARCERATION POLICIES IN RUSSIA

Classified By: EUR DAS David Kramer, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Department requests Post express at an appropriate level our serious human rights and humanitarian concerns about certain issues regarding incarceration practices in Russia. For USOSCE, Post should understand that the current demarche is intended to be raised in the course of our bilateral discussions on human rights and not in the OSCE PC and is being delivered in Moscow. End Summary.

OBJECTIVE

[1](#)2. (SBU) Department requests Post to express concern about the harsh incarceration conditions and treatment of some prisoners in Russia, including, most recently the lengthy delays in providing appropriate treatment to the critically ill former Yukos VP Vasilii Aleksanyan; and, convey our previously expressed concern about the use of psychiatric incarceration by state authorities and medical institutions to silence opposition activists or others expressing independent or critical views of the authorities. We also note with concern disturbing reports by human rights activists, including Russian Human Rights Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin, of brutal conditions for transfers of prisoners to penal colonies, and a growing number of prison camps characterized by extremely cruel conditions and abusive treatment of prisoners, including beatings and torture. Lukin recently released his annual report and made public statements to President Putin decrying the conditions of incarceration in Russian prisons, which he says not only do not meet international, but also fail to meet Russian standards.

BACKGROUND

[1](#)3. (C) As Post is aware, in a disturbing breach of an individual's right to confidentiality, Russian prison authorities recently revealed that Vasilii Aleksanyan, a former vice-president of Yukos, is sick with HIV/AIDS. Aleksanyan was transferred from prison to a civilian hospital for treatment only after lengthy delays in receiving proper medical treatment, which provoked protests from Russian human rights advocates and an international outcry. Mikhail Khodorkovskiy, the Yukos founder whose plight also has raised serious concerns about the selective application of the legal system against the Kremlin's political opponents, drew additional attention to Aleksanyan's desperate situation by going on a hunger strike. Khodorkovskiy has publicly asserted that Aleksanyan has been under pressure to sign confessions against him and had been refused adequate medical attention because of his refusal to sign such confessions. We welcome reports that Aleksanyan may now, belatedly, be receiving appropriate medical treatment and urge the Russian government to continue to provide such treatment.

[1](#)4. (C) We have also previously expressed our concern about

the use of psychiatric incarceration against opposition activists or others expressing independent or critical views of the authorities, such as the forcible commitment of Larissa Arap in Murmansk in August, and Artem Basyrov in Mari El in December. Another Russian activist, Roman Nikolaychik, was hospitalized against his will in February in Tver.

¶5. (SBU) We strongly urge the Russian government to provide humane conditions of incarceration, to afford those incarcerated needed medical treatment and to ensure due process rights and protections in accordance with international standards and Russia,s commitments under international law.

POINT OF CONTACT

¶6. (SBU) Post should report results of efforts by cable to EUR/RUS Mary Glantz or contact her at (202) 647-6756 or via e-mail for any necessary further background information.
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